Dubbing animation into Spanish: behind the voices of animated characters

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ABSTRACT

In response to the burgeoning growth that the animation market has witnessed in recent years and to the competitive rivalry that exists within the industry, the presence of celebrity voices in animated movies is increasingly regarded as an effective strategy to broaden audience appeal. This paper attempts to determine if the use of celebrities in the original version may somehow influence the way the target text is dubbed in foreign markets. A clean-cut distinction between two key concepts that are sometimes overlapped, voice acting and dubbing, will not only provide the perfect backdrop for the upcoming sections, but will also offer useful context to understand their theoretical and practical limitations. The data under study will illustrate the current panorama within the Spanish dubbing framework by comparing the presence of both celebrities and dubbing actors in those Hollywood blockbusters released in Spain from 2007 to 2013. The results obtained suggest that some of the strategies used in the dubbed version might indeed be prompted by the original voicing.

KEYWORDS

Dubbing, voice acting, animated films, celebrities, dubbing actors, voice actors.

1. Introduction

Animation is in vogue. The exponential growth that this genre has experienced over the last decade has even led to talk about a period of "animation congestion" (Verrier 2013). In the US, one of the leading countries in animation production, the total amount of movies produced per year since the turn of the new century has doubled from 18 films in 2000 to 37 in 2013, reaching its peak in 2011 with 45 productions, as shown in Figure 1.

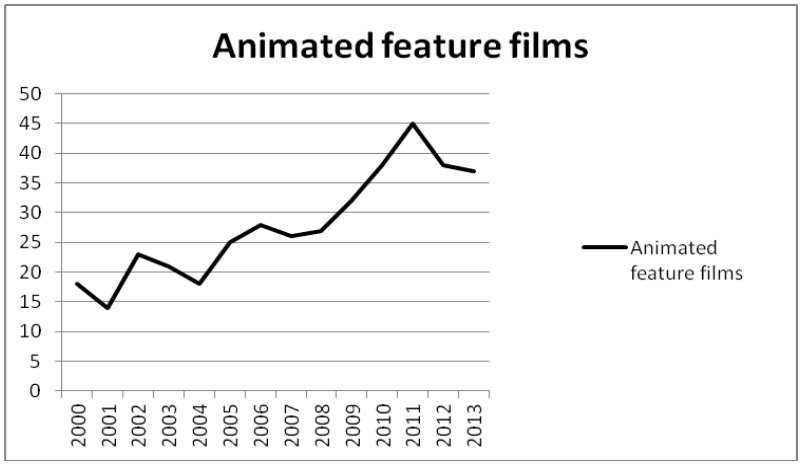


Figure 1. Number of animated films released per year in the US from 2000 to 2013 (Data extracted from www.the-numbers.com)

In view of the increment in the number of choices, industry leaders strive for bringing forth the best picture by making use of consumer-oriented strategies that can generate a healthy profit. Apparently, one of the most effective ways of drawing a wider audience consists of casting famous personalities to lend their voice to animated characters. This holds particularly true for the US, where celebrities (also star talents[1]) are now taking up the reins of voice acting, a profession that, not so long ago, used to fall under the realm of voice actors[2] with several years of experience to their credit. In overseas markets and, especially, in Spain, where the vast majority of animated products released in theatres come from Anglo-American territories, this trend might pose a new challenge and affect the way in which animated movies are being dubbed.

To date, even though there are certain countries such as the so-called FIGS (France, Italy, Germany and Spain) that are used to viewing motion pictures dubbed into their mother tongue, animation and cartoons are increasingly being dubbed in subtitling countries (Chaume 2012: 2). This means that dubbing is becoming the preferred audiovisual mode when localising animated products in international markets. A case in point is *Shrek the Third* (2007), which was dubbed into 36 languages worldwide and *Frozen* (2013), which was released utterly dubbed into 41 languages. Both films are examples of animated movies whose original version has been voiced by celebrities. But, is animation beginning to be dubbed by celebrities also in Spanish markets or, conversely, are dubbing actors still an integral part of this activity?

To answer these initial questions, the present article will draw a clear line between voice acting and dubbing both at a theoretical and a practical level. The following sections will provide some background about the first inclusion of celebrities into the voice acting sphere and

will examine how filmmakers and producers are taking advantage of their popularity for audience appeal. Attention will subsequently be turned to the patterns followed in the dubbing of animated movies in Spain. For this purpose, the data collected will be presented and analysed and the results obtained will shed new light on the extent of influence that the original version exerts on the target version regarding the presence of celebrities within the dubbing cast.

2. From voice acting to dubbing

2.1. Terminological issues

Voice acting (also known as voicing) refers to the art of putting a voice to animated characters so as to create the illusion of them talking. Following Alburger's description (2011: 6), this professional practice "is about creating real and believable characters in real and believable situations that listeners can relate to and be motivated by". The origins of voice acting can be traced back to November 1928, when Walt Disney Studios produced the black-and-white short film *Steamboat Willie*, starring Mickey Mouse. This singing and whistling character was voiced by Walt Disney himself, thus becoming the first cartoon to include synchronized sound. The first full-length talking (non-animated) film, called *The Lights of New York* (1928), had made its appearance just a few months earlier (July 28) in the US. Such key events certainly ushered in a promising era in the history of cinema: sound films, better known as *talkies* (Chaume 2012: 11).

Voice acting, though, is not the only name given to describe the practice of lending a voice to animated characters. Within the industry, some professionals prefer using the term "voice-over," although, more often than not, both labels are employed interchangeably. Wright and Lallo (2009: 1), for instance, define voice-over as "the voice communicating unseen on an audio track used in radio, television, film, multimedia or the business world," and Baker claims that: "voice-overs can be any announcement heard along with (or over) another medium. This expands the meaning from radio, film, and television to theatre, telecommunications, video games, handheld computers, and so forth" (2005: 1).

Interestingly, some authors such as Alburger (2011: 6–7) seem to make a clear-cut distinction between voice acting and voice-over in terms of believability. According to the aforementioned scholar, voice-over performance is emotionally empty and manages to create a purely superficial bond with the audience. Commercials can be a representative example of voice-over within this context. Voice acting performance, on the contrary, aims to forge a close and emotional

bond with the public by telling a gripping story that attracts their attention, as in animated movies or cartoons. The Glossary of Voice-Over Terms (2013) even claims that "the more accurate term now is voice acting [over voice-over], which is the art of using the voice to bring life to written words." In any case, such terminological divergences might be regarded as the outcome of the not-so-new, yet still under-researched, field of voice-over where "the coexistence of the same denomination for two different concepts in two different, yet still related, fields" (Franco *et al.* 2010: 19), namely Film Studies and Audiovisual Translation (AVT) Studies, may lead to "a certain degree of difficulty when attempting to define the new mode and its features" (*ibid.*). In fact, from a translational viewpoint, voice-over consists of a translated dialogue heard over the original spoken dialogue, the latter being faintly audible in the background (Barzdevics 2012: 58), as best defined in Chaume (2012: 3):

> Voice-over is another type of revoicing, where the original source language track of an audiovisual text is overlapped with another track on which translated dialogues in the target language are recorded, such that both tracks can be heard simultaneously. Normally the translation is heard a few seconds after the original voices, which are heard at a much lower volume.

It goes without saying that, within AVT Studies, voice-over still remains fairly unexplored and lags behind other areas of research such as dubbing and subtitling (Chaume 2004: 35). Such a gloomy landscape might have triggered the description of this practice as "the ugly duckling of AVT" (Orero 2006). Despite the efforts made to consolidate voice-over as an AVT mode in its own right, it has usually been classified as a subcategory of dubbing (Espasa 2001: 184). Whether due to simplification or to the apparent supremacy of dubbing (over voice-over), in Spain some practitioners refer to voice-over performances simply as dubbing (*ibid.*). Likewise, the process of putting a voice to animated characters in those films recorded originally in Spanish, where the language is left untouched, is also known as dubbing. In this case, and following the definition given at the onset of this section, the label 'voice acting' appears to be more appropriate within this particular context, considering that the term 'dubbing,' as generally described in the literature (Fodor 1976, Chaume 2012), consists of the substitution of the original track of a film for another track containing dialogues rendered in the target language. Thus, the main difference between voice acting and dubbing is primarily related to the translational dimension, given that the former would not imply language switching.

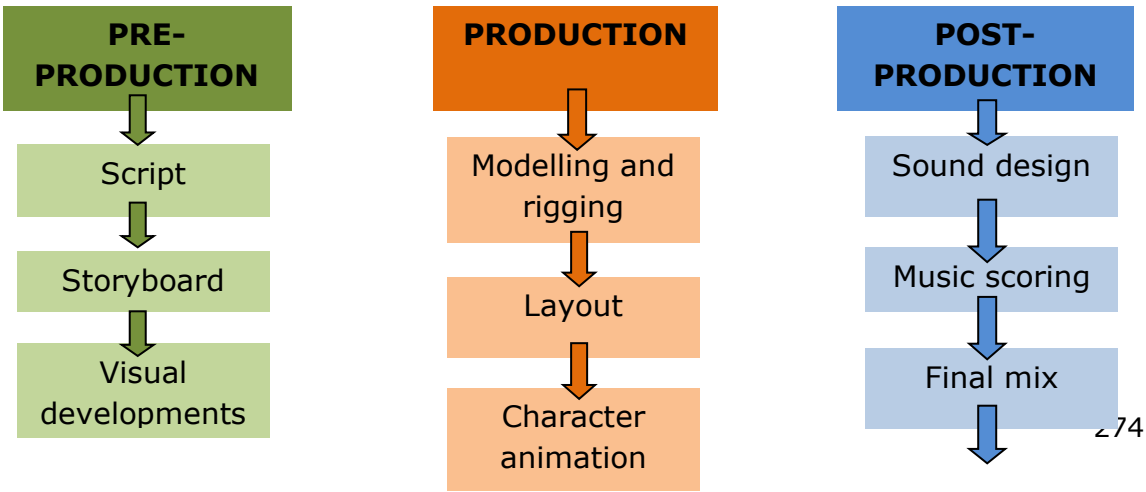
The current terminological scenario begs for a consistent and clear understanding of the terms that will be used throughout this paper: voice acting and dubbing. For this reason, when dealing with the task

of giving a voice to animated characters in the language spoken by the country where the feature film has been made, the term 'voice acting' will be employed. When those dialogues are translated, and subsequently synchronised, into the language of the country in which the film is to be screened, the term employed hereinafter will be 'dubbing.'

2.2. The recording process

In addition to the differences found between voice acting and dubbing from a linguistic point of view (original versus translated language), the production phase at which voice actors and dubbers record their lines accounts for another significant dissimilarity: whereas voice acting comes into being during the pre-synchronisation stage, when the movement of the animated characters' mouth has still not been created, dubbing is an intrinsic part of the distribution process, when the accomplished movie is ready and willing to reach foreign audiences.

But, before delving into the recording process itself, let us take a necessary foray into some of the steps followed in the creation of an animated movie so as to better understand, firstly, how the actor's voice is recorded and added to the feature film and, secondly, which qualities of the process are exclusive to voice acting and which are exclusive to dubbing. The whole production process is explained by Dreamworks Animation (2013), one of the leading film companies in the world, in 15 steps: script, storyboards, visual developments, stereo 3D 1, stereo 3D 2, casting, modelling and rigging, layout, character animation, surfaces, effects, lighting, sound design, music scoring and final mix. Then, the international distribution of the film gets off the ground. The whole process can be divided into three broad categories: pre-production, production and post-production stages, as illustrated in Figure 2. It is worth mentioning that this production pipeline might vary slightly according to the animation studio responsible for the project (cf. McQuade 2013) and, therefore, is by no means conclusive.



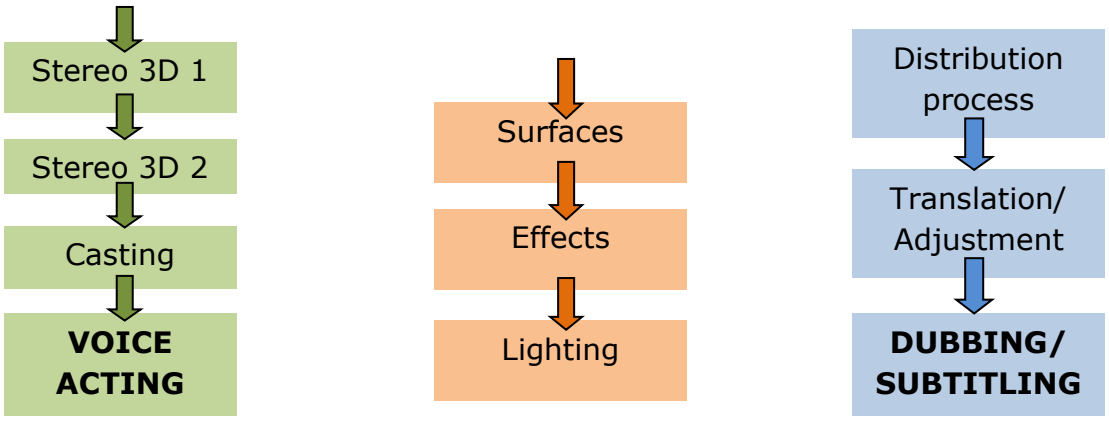


Figure 2. Stages in the creation and distribution of an animated film (freely adapted from Dreamworks Animation 2013)

Given that a thorough analysis of each one of the phases involved in creating an animated movie from scratch would fall outside the scope of this article, only those steps throwing new light on the practice of voice acting and dubbing will be developed here.

Voice acting is conceived during the pre-production stage. At this point, scriptwriters hand over the movie script to the storyboard team, who brings the story to life through a collection of drawings in the form of a comic strip which is finally digitally photographed. Once each and every sequence has been planned and designed stylistically and every line is allocated to every character, the search for voices comes into play. Unlike casting for live-action movies, the focus is mainly placed on the texture of the actors' voice and their ability to merge with the onscreen character. Because filmmakers and producers are interested in what an actor sounds like, physical appearance takes a back seat here, although, as will be shown in Section 3, the popularity of famous actors can be used as a profit-seeking tool or their personal traits can be occasionally replicated in the animated character for audience appeal.

An important point to note is that voice actors usually record their lines without any kind of visual support, given that environments and characters have still not been animated. Their performance is frequently videotaped and used as a backup for subsequent phases of the production process. In fact, filmmakers can employ the voice artists' articulatory movements as a mould from which they create the moving mouth of every character and, eventually, match the original soundtrack with each open and closed mouth. Voice artists, therefore, enjoy a great deal of freedom in their rendition of a role and are allowed to introduce not only personal linguistic traits but also extralinguistic elements along with diegetic sounds that fit coherently with the whole ensemble. The cast usually receives the

script several days before the first day of voice shooting and is normally given enough time to rehearse and prepare their characters accordingly.

Once the voice track has been recorded at the studio, characters are modelled and rigged. In other words, modellers start building features' shapes along with their expressions and gestures and decide how they will be moving and what clothes they will be wearing. Characters are then animated in the computer and fully articulated by adding the voice performance previously recorded by the actors. After incorporating colours and textures to the layout, surfacing artists concentrate on environments and lighting shifts and agree camera moves and shots in order to create the mood of the story. Eventually, the dialogue is mixed with the music and sound effects and any unwanted footage is removed from the final version.

As soon as the editing process grinds to a halt and the film is brought to completion, the distribution process begins. Needless to say, this stage holds the key to maximising profits in foreign markets, which generally produce the primary source of revenue (Romero Fresco 2013: 202). The film is then dubbed (or subtitled) into the different languages of the countries where the animated movie is to be released. For the purpose of the present study, further elucidation will be confined to the dubbing mode and, more specifically, to its recording process.

In the dubbing studio, dubbing actors[3] work with the translated, adapted and generally spotted copy of the dialogues and are actively supervised by the dubbing director, who guides actors in their rendition of the role. For the sake of invisibility, and in order to comply with the ultimate goal of dubbing, that is, "that viewers watch and hear foreign actors speaking in the viewers' own language" (Chaume 2012: 67), dubbers have to fit themselves into a constricting mould laden with visual synchronies and temporal limitations. They must abide by two major types of synchronies known as lip or phonetic synchrony and isochrony. The former is the most difficult to achieve, as it forces dubbers to make their words coincide with the articulatory movements of the character's mouth, "especially in close-ups and extreme close-ups" (Chaume 2012: 68). Isochrony consists of matching the duration of the dubbing artist's interventions with the length of the onscreen character's dialogue, what seems more straightforward provided that the translation has been successfully adjusted by the dialogue writer in the previous step of the process. Even though know-how in synchronisation is more than ideal, today most studios make use of specific software (such as Pro Tools Software) able to fine-tune the recorded dialogue and make it fit in the character's lips in case of mismatch (Wright and Lallo

2009: 224). It goes without saying that the voice actors' task is much less restrictive, considering that they are given more leeway to deliver their lines as well as to dictate the pace of their words and can even take the liberty to improvise. In fact, according to Wright and Lallo (2009: 47), some television networks such as Nickelodeon are already undertaking improvisational techniques to provide the scene with unique attributes.

The recording process itself also differs from the routine followed by voice actors. In dubbing, takes are often recorded in achronological and fragmentary sequences and dubbed individually, thus dubbing artists are rarely given the opportunity to interact with each other. They generally have access just to a summary of the plot made by the director and time for rehearsals is always out of schedule (Whitman-Linsen 1992: 85). The steps taken are generally the same: voice talents arrive at the studio for the recording session and are given a copy of the script containing the passages they are about to dub; the scene is usually projected a couple of times onto a film screen while dubbing actors can take notes of time codes, tempo, accented words, short and long pauses, intonation or other paralinguistic information such as wails, sighs or giggles; and finally, they record the synchronised take in a way that their words fit in the onscreen character's mouth. In contrast, as stated above, voice actors can prepare their roles long before the movie starts shooting and can take their time to immerse themselves in the characters. Moreover, whereas dubbing practitioners can be required to dub more than one film and character per day, voice actors focus solely on one performance during the same time period. Given that synchronies are generally out of the question, voice actors can focus on delivering sounding-spontaneous dialogues, despite the general artificial setting of the motion picture. This means that the way they conceive a voiced role is very akin to the way on-camera and on-stage actors approach a performance in a film, a TV series or a theatre play.

Both dubbers and voice actors make use of a pair of headphones and stand in front of a microphone, but the latter barely need the printed copy of the script placed on their lectern, since they have previously had the time to learn most of their lines by heart. On the contrary, dubbing actors need to build up an effective visual acuity to shift repeatedly from the written script placed on the fixed lectern to the ongoing and mute scene that is to be filled with their words and must strike a balance between an appropriate intonation and a similar-to-real oral discourse while reading their lines (Sánchez Mompeán 2012: 91).

The differences outlined between the recording process in voice acting and dubbing are particularly relevant for the discussion

proposed here. The fact that celebrities are starting to take over the reins of voicing for animation in Hollywood blockbusters might, in general terms, suffer from minor drawbacks in view of the similarity between performing a role for animation and performing a role for live-action movies. However, whenever non-dubbing actors take part in the dubbing of an animated film, they might be missing a myriad of techniques and competences alien to the acting task, namely synchronies, voice placement and production in front of a (special type of) microphone[4], and specific tonal patterns.

3. From voice actors to celebrities

Since its debut in the early 1890s animation has certainly made significant strides towards its current position as a consolidated genre. The latest technological breakthroughs along with producers' competition to gain the favour of the audience have contributed to enhance the quality and quantity of the films released per year (see Figure 1). This genre, however, has witnessed a major shift in the past years as far as the voicing of characters is concerned. A few decades ago, voice actors were responsible for lending their voices to the vast majority of animated movies such as *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) and *Cinderella* (1950). Their voices became soon familiar to the public, though their faces were completely unknown to them. Nowadays, this trend appears to have taken a backseat in the animation market, as movies are now voiced by A-listers, thus relegating voice artists to the sidelines. But, when did voice acting stop being exclusively the realm of voice actors?

Celebrities' first foray into the world of animation took place in 1992, when Walt Disney Studios decided to cast the well-known actor Robin Williams to play the role of the manic genie in *Aladdin* (1992). The movie became a huge box office success, obtaining a total gross of over 500 million dollars in both domestic and foreign markets (Box Office Mojo 2013) and winning two out of its five Academy Awards nominations. Not surprisingly, this favourable outcome led to a new trend towards using famous actors' voices that producers and directors embraced forthwith. *The Lion King* (1994), with Matthew Broderick and Jeremy Irons featuring the roles of Simba and Scar, respectively, and *Toy Story* (1995), with Tom Hanks as Woody and Tim Allen as Buzz Lightyear, serve as remarkable examples. Wright and Lallo explain it as follows:

> A more recent problem for voice-over artists is the use of celebrity voices. Businessmen feel that known celebrity names will bring in an audience, especially to films. Fans may go to see a celebrity's work, even when they can't see the celebrity himself (2009: 5).

The turn of the new century did nothing but confirm this clear direction. Instances of this new reality can be found in *Shrek* (2001) and its three sequels (2004, 2007, 2010), Shrek being voiced by Mike Myers, Princess Fiona by Cameron Diaz, Donkey by Eddie Murphy and Puss in Boots by Antonio Banderas; in *Madagascar* (2005) and its two sequels (2008, 2012), Alex being voiced by Ben Stiller and Marty by Chris Rock; or in *Rango* (2011), Rango being voiced by Johnny Deep and Beans by Isla Fisher, to name but a few. Although the great majority of these famous voices belong to the acting sphere, having an acting career is not an indispensable factor to get a role, insofar as other personalities from diverse backgrounds can also lend their voice to animated characters: singers (Katy Perry in *The Smurfs* 2011 or Taylor Swift in *Dr. Seuss' The Lorax* 2012), comedians (David Cross in *Kung Fu Panda 2* 2011 or Russell Brand in *Despicable me* 2010 and *Despicable me 2* 2013), film directors (Carlos Saldanha in *Monsters vs. Aliens* 2009 or Guillermo del Toro in *Puss in Boots* 2011), television hosts (Clive Pearse in *Shrek* 2001 or Larry King in *Bee Movie* 2007), sportscasters (Darrell Waltrip in *Cars 2* 2011 or Brent Musburger in *Planes* 2013), sportsmen (Lewis Hamilton and Jeff Gordon in *Cars 2* 2011 or Shaquille O'Neal in *The Smurfs 2* 2013), etc. Nonetheless, because filmmakers and producers are aware of their limited expertise in acting, most of the names given above have only lent their voice in supporting roles.

It goes without saying that in the US celebrities are taking over the voice acting industry when it comes to animation and the days when unknown voice actors from backgrounds such as Vaudeville, Broadway or certain radio broadcasts were recruited seem to have been forgotten. Excellent communication skills and a flexible voice were the most demanding qualities when casting a voice actor. Today, priority is given to the popularity of star talents and their ability to win the public's support. This is why Wright and Lallo (2009: 178) concede that the fact of casting celebrities instead of voice artists opens ample publicity opportunities for a film and attracts those fans wanting to hear their favourite actors star.

All too often, filmmakers go one step further and reckon that, apart from hearing their voices, moviegoers may want to see their favourite movie stars portrayed in the physical appearance of the animated character. This profit-seeking strategy appears to be an appealing means of drawing a bigger audience. For this reason, characters are created by bearing in mind the physical traits of the celebrity who will lend his/her voice to the feature. Sometimes even the gestures made by the original star are recreated and added to the feature with the goal to create some sort of facsimile. This symbiosis makes fictional characters closely resemble behind-the-mic celebrities in the pursuit of a more genuine cartoon, as it is the case of Will Smith and

Angelina Jolie in *Shark Tale* (2004), Edward Asner in *Up* (2009), Kristen Wiig in *Despicable me* (2010), John C. Reilly in *Wreck-it Ralph* (2012), or Emma Stone in *The Croods* (2013).

Figure 3. Resemblance between animated characters and their voice actors (Images extracted from Rajmohan[5] 2013)

Casting celebrities may be interpreted as a conscious choice on behalf of filmmakers and producers to activate the prior knowledge of the audience. In other words, when listening to a celebrity in a movie, viewers are bound to resort to their previous knowledge about this star talent and will hold a series of expectations based on his/her behaviour and personality as public figure and on previous roles portrayed by him/her. A good example is found in Banderas' Puss in Boots, which immediately leads the audience to think of the feline version of the character featured by Antonio Banderas in *The Mask of Zorro* (1998) due to his strong Spanish accent and moves them away from the original French character "D'Artagnan". In the Spanish version, also dubbed by Antonio Banderas, Puss in Boots speaks

Spanish with a marked Andalusian accent. By using their prior knowledge, the audience is well aware of Banderas' origins (he comes from Málaga) and of the connotations that an accent can carry in a given region.

By the same token, in the four movies of the Shrek series, the characterization of Mike Myers as Shrek and Eddie Murphy as Donkey triggers the previous knowledge of the audience about the jocular facet of these two actors and the fact that most of their films can be categorized within the comedy genre. As a result, viewers automatically infer that these animated characters are likely to be hilarious because they are voiced by two actors that are considered predominantly humorous by the general public. In the Spanish version, the prior knowledge of the audience is also tried to be activated by casting two popular comedians in the local TV panorama: José Mota and Juan Muñoz, who managed to form a comedy duo known as "Cruz y Raya." Aware of their charisma and sense of humour, the impression gained by the audience about Shrek and *Asno* ('Donkey' in Spanish) is closely related to the personality of the comedians featuring their voices. Admittedly, this task of making inferences speaks volumes of how "our prior knowledge about particular kinds of people affects the way we interpret new information" (Culpeper 2001: 57).

These examples illustrate how the inclusion of celebrities in the original version is welcoming a new audiovisual reality in the world of voicing animation that is apparently influencing the way these films are being localised in foreign countries. Within the Spanish dubbing context in particular, it seems that this trend is also finding its place, since some roles are starting to be portrayed by non-dubbing actors (as in the case of *Puss in Boots* and *Shrek*). This study, however, would benefit from further evidence to corroborate whether these isolated instances have become the norm rather than the exception. For this reason, and taking the above as a starting point, the next section gathers useful data on the patterns followed in the dubbing of animated films into Spanish.

4. Dubbing animated films into Spanish

4.1. Collection of data

With the purpose of obtaining consisting patterns, the data presented below have been retrieved from the movie database (IMDB), the world's leading Web page on filmic content. For ease of research, the total number of films gathered in this site has been narrowed down by using the filter "Top-US-grossing Animation Titles." To avoid casting the net too wide, the years of release have been limited from

2007 to 2013. During this period of time, the production of animated films undergoes a remarkable rise (see Figure 1), with 45 movies released in 2011 at its peak. Out of the first 120 top-US-grossing animated films of all time, a total number of 55 Hollywood blockbusters were released between 2007 and 2013. The reason why the movies selected belong to the US film industry is motivated by this country's leading position as animation producer, hence the sheer amount of films dubbed and released in Spain hails from this market. In order to delve into the professionals playing the main and supporting roles in both the original and the Spanish version of each one of the films under study, the online sources used were Behind the voice actors and eldoblaje.com respectively. After analyzing and orderly labelling every single movie, a full account is given of the patterns followed in the dubbing of these 55 movies, as shown in the taxonomy proposed below.

4.2. Analysis of data

The table provided here compiles the 55 highest-grossing animated movies produced in the US between 2007 and 2013, all of which have been dubbed and released in Spain. The chart is divided into four well-distinguished categories containing the details of the filmic products under study (pattern, name of film, original title and year of release) and four broad sub-categories classifying the movies according to the practitioners in charge of the voicing and dubbing (celebrities dubbed by celebrities, celebrities dubbed by dubbers, voice actors dubbed by dubbers and, finally, the occurrences found in musical films). It is worth noting that some instances might fall under more than one pattern when necessary.

PATTERN	NAME OF FILM	ORIGINAL TITLE	YEAR
Celebrities dubbed by celebrities			
Main characters	*Monstruos University*	*Monsters University*	2013
	Gru 2, mi villano favorito	*Despicable me 2*	2013
	Lluvia de albóndigas 2	*Cloudy with a chance of meatballs 2*	2013
	Madagascar 3: De marcha por Europa	*Madagascar 3: Europe's Most Wanted*	2012
	Hotel Transilvania	*Hotel Transylvania*	2012
	Kung Fu Panda 2	*Kung Fu Panda 2*	2011
	El Gato con Botas	*Puss in Boots*	2011
	Shrek, felices para siempre	*Shrek forever after*	2010
	Gru, mi villano favorito	*Despicable me*	2010
	Lluvia de albóndigas	*Cloudy with a chance of meatballs*	2009
	Monstruos contra Alienígenas	*Monsters vs Aliens*	2009

	Kung Fu Panda	*Kung Fu Panda*	2008
	Madagascar 2	*Madagascar: Escape 2 Africa*	2008
	Shrek Tercero	*Shrek the Third*	2007
Supporting characters	*Toy Story 3*	*Toy Story 3*	2010
	Bee Movie	*Bee Movie*	2007
	Locos por el surf	*Surf's up*	2007
Supporting characters related to the celebrity's job	*Aviones*	*Planes*	2013
	Cars 2	*Cars 2*	2011
	Up	*Up*	2009
	Ratatouille	*Ratatouille*	2007
	Locos por el surf	*Surf's up*	2007
Voiced and dubbed by the same star talent	*El Lórax: En busca de la trúfula perdida*	*Dr. Seuss' The Lorax*	2012
	Madagascar 3: De marcha por Europa	*Madagascar 3: Europe's Most Wanted*	2012
	El Gato con Botas	*Puss in Boots*	2011
	Cars 2	*Cars 2*	2011
Celebrities dubbed by dubbers			
Usual dubbers	*Turbo*	*Turbo*	2013
	Rango	*Rango*	2011
	Los Pitufos	*The Smurfs*	2011
	Hop	*Hop*	2011
	Cómo entrenar a tu dragón	*How to train your dragon*	2010
	El Oso Yogui	*Yogui Bear*	2010
	Megamind	*Megamind*	2010
	Horton y el Mundo de los Quien	*Horton Hears a Who!*	2008
	Los Simpsons. La Película	*The Simpsons Movie*	2007
Different dubbers	*Epic: el mundo secreto*	*Epic*	2013
	Los Croods	*The Croods*	2013
	Los Pitufos 2	*The Smurfs 2*	2013
	Ice Age 4	*Ice Age 4*	2012
	Brave	*Brave*	2012
	¡Rompe Ralph!	*Wreck-it Ralph!*	2012
	El Origen de los Guardianes	*Rise of the Guardians*	2012
	Gnomeo & Julieta	*Gnomeo & Juliet*	2011
	Happy Feet 2	*Happy Feet 2*	2011
	Las Aventuras de Tintín	*The Adventures of Tintin*	2011
	Cuento de Navidad	*A Christmas Carol*	2009
	Los mundos de Coraline	*Coraline*	2009
	Ice Age 3	*Ice Age 3*	2009
	Bolt	*Bolt*	2008
	Beowulf	*Beowulf*	2007
Voice actors dubbed by dubbers			
	Wall-E: Batallón de limpieza	*Wall-E*	2008
	Ratatouille	*Ratatouille*	2007
Musical films			
Lines and songs dubbed by two different dubbers	*Río*	*Rio*	2011
	Frozen: El Reino del Hielo	*Frozen*	2013

Lines and songs dubbed by one dubber and one singer, respectively	*El Lórax: En busca de la trúfula perdida*	*Dr. Seuss' The Lorax*	2012
	Enredados	*Tangled*	2011
	Tiana y el Sapo	*The princess and the frog*	2010
Lines and songs dubbed by the same dubber	*Alvin y las ardillas 3*	*Alvin and the chipmunks: Chip-wrecked*	2011
	Alvin y las ardillas 2	*Alvin and the chipmunks: the squeakquel*	2009
	Alvin y las ardillas	*Alvin and the chipmunks*	2007

Table 1. Top-US-grossing animated films dubbed and released in Spain between 2007 and 2013

A first look at the results reveals that 53 out of the 55 movies analysed have been voiced by celebrities in their original version, *Ratatouille* (2007) and *Wall-E* (2008) being the only examples of films voiced almost entirely by actors with previous experience in the voice acting arena. These figures do nothing but confirm the apparent supremacy of famous personalities within the animation industry in the US.

As far as the dubbing market in Spain is concerned, it is possible to notice a slight higher occurrence of the films dubbed in their entirety by dubbers (54%), even though the films resorting to famous voices, either in leading roles or in supporting roles, still account for a significant 46% of the total amount. Whilst dubbing actors continue to be an integral part in the Spanish dubbing industry, there is no denying of the fact that nearly half of these movies drew upon well-known Spanish celebrities. As per this percentage (46%), it seems reasonable to think that Spanish dubbing is beginning to follow the path traced by Hollywood filmmakers and, aware of the marketability of celebrities, producers seek to exploit profitability to the full by making use of their widely-recognized voices as additional highlights of the motion picture. According to the analyzed data, the preferred choice of producers is to use star talents for the dubbing of main characters, since 14 movies include famous figures in leading roles. Similar to the pattern followed in the US, main characters' voices are mostly dubbed by actors and comedians, whilst supporting roles are usually performed by other famous figures such as singers or sportsmen/women.

Other strategy to increase the viewership's reception consists of establishing a professional relationship between both the character and the famous person responsible for dubbing it. Five out of the total number of movies examined reveal this tendency. Nevertheless, whereas in three instances this strategy had already been adopted in

the original version and the Spanish version has done nothing but replicate it, in the other two cases the dubbing takes the lead by introducing voices related to the character's job. The movies *Up* (2009) and *Planes* (2013) stand as strong examples of the second case. In the former the Spanish reporter Matías Prats portrays a newsreel announcer (although in the original version this voice is lent by David Kaye, actor and voice actor) and in the latter several members of the Spanish Air Force "La Patrulla Águila" contributed in the dubbing by featuring the voices of some of the planes. However, in *Cars 2* (2011) the racing car "Otis" was voiced in the original version by the famous American car driver Jeff Gordon and in the Spanish version the well-known Formula One driver Fernando Alonso was asked to lend his voice to this character. Interesting as it is, such idea was enthusiastically welcomed in other countries, with Sebastian Vettel in the German dubbing or Vitaly Petrov in the Russian version. Also in *Cars 2* the Spanish sportscaster Antonio Lobato was responsible for providing the spoken commentaries of the live sporting events taking place in the movie, which were originally given by the American sports commentator Darrell Waltrip. As for *Ratatouille* (2007), the renowned chef Ferran Adrià plays the role of a culinary expert attending to the restaurant. This strategy has not only been employed in the original version, but this role has also been featured by prestigious chefs around the world such as Jamie Oliver in England or Gualtiero Marchesi in Italy. Finally, in *Surf's Up* (2007) the sports commentator Sal Masekela is dubbed by the Spanish sportscaster Manolo Lama.

Following this, the decisions made about the dubbing cast can be often attributed to the influence of the original version upon the dubbed version, primarily when using famous personalities related to the feature's job. This strategy is regarded as an effective way of bringing more reality to the film as soon as the spectator discovers the professional connection between the character and its well-known voice.

Regarding those celebrities that voice the original film and, additionally, dub the Spanish version, a total of five examples in four movies can be singled out. This is the case of Antonio Banderas and Salma Hayek in *Puss in Boots* (2011), Lewis Hamilton in *Cars 2* (2011), Paz Vega in *Madagascar 3* (2012), and Danny DeVito in *Dr. Seuss' The Lorax* (2012). Unlike the first two actors, who are bilingual in English and Spanish, and the Andalusian actress Paz Vega, whose accent is an essential part of the role when lending her voice to the "Andalusian triplets", Hamilton and DeVito took their first steps in the learning of Spanish language for the recording of the film, reason why they deliver their lines with a strong foreign accent and their pronunciation is not as clear as should be expected. This language

barrier may definitely pose a problem for the cohesion of the end product and even imply a breakdown in communication, since a clear voice together with correct pronunciation is *conditio sine qua non* to comply with dubbing quality standards (Chaume 2007) and "the absence of these elements […] puts the accurate transmission of the message at risk, both in terms of information and aesthetics" (Chaume 2007: 75).

A remarkable pattern is also revealed upon investigation of the 26 films which have been dubbed by dubbing actors altogether. A high proportion of 15 instances did not resort to the recurrent Spanish voices of the original actors in other live-action movies. Some representative examples are Nicolas Cage in *The Croods* (2013), who was not dubbed by his usual dubber Jordi Brau (his Spanish voice in more than 45 movies) but by the dubbing actor José Luis Mediavilla; Colin Farrell in *Epic* (2013), instead of being dubbed by his usual dubber Sergio Zamora (his Spanish voice in around 20 films), was dubbed by the dubbing actor José Posada; and Emma Thompson in *Brave* (2012) was not dubbed by his usual dubber Mercedes Montalá (her Spanish voice in 15 movies) but by the dubbing actress Pepa Castro. Here, a shift in the usual dubbing cast cannot carry negative implications from the point of view of the audience's perception, considering that animated voices are not identified with a given actor's face and, in turn, viewers do not expect to hear any particular voice. The end product, however, might suffer from a major drawback if the consistent attribution of a given voice to a given character is not respected throughout sequels and spinoffs, since the cinematic experience might be completely broken to the detriment of the viewers. Similarly, with the aim of maintaining the internal coherence between what is seen and what is heard, consistency would be more than ideal in the films resorting to the animated alter ego of the star talents (see Section 3). For instance, if the character Lola in *Shark Tale* (2004) resembles Angelina Jolie, original viewers would expect to hear the voice of this actress and, reasonably, Spanish viewers would expect to hear Jolie's usual Spanish voice (dubbed by the dubbing actress Nuria Mediavilla).

Animated musicals (genre in which songs sung by characters are uniformly combined with their dialogues) yield a small proportion of the corpus with only eight movies released between 2007 and 2013. Although limited conclusions can be drawn in terms of the most common patterns used in this genre, it is worth gleaning the information resulting from their analysis. First and foremost, it should be noted that the totality of these films have been dubbed by dubbing actors but differ in the performers who are in charge of singing the songs in the Spanish version. To voice the original film, the favoured option among producers is to count on the presence of a famous star

with a double facet: as an actor and as a singer. However, Spanish producers usually cast two different people to play the same role in the dubbed version: a dubbing actor generally conveys the oral delivery, whereas a renowned singer conveys the musical part, as happens in *Frozen* (2013), *Dr. Seuss' The Lorax* (2012), *Tangled* (2011) and *The princess and the frog* (2010). The reason underlying this choice may be a matter of competency among Anglo-American actors, not found among Spanish performers to the same degree. Because this genre enjoys huge popularity across the US, many actors are willing to receive high-level training in singing and dancing to increase their professional opportunities. In Spain, though, the line between actors (who just act) and singers (who just sing) is usually much more defined in view of the lower demand for this particular genre when compared to the US.

On other occasions, as can be seen in *Rio*, the songs are sung by another dubber demonstrating a high degree of singing and vocal skills, thus contributing to a well-synchronized outcome. As for *Alvin and the chipmunks* (2007) and its two sequels (2009, 2011), the same dubber is in charge of both the delivering of the role and the singing of the songs. This option is not ideal but singing skills were not paramount to convey the role in this particular case, since the songs included are altered via a voice changer, a technological devise mainly used to distort the pitch of the voice.

Following the results at hand, dubbing actors still play an essential role in the dubbing industry and, more specifically, in animation, where all bets begin to be placed on famous voices, chiefly in the source products. Yet, it seems undeniable that star talents are accountable for a substantial proportion of the dubbed corpus (46%), either dubbing leading characters or performing supporting roles. What emerges from here is that Spain is gradually joining to a trend that has become commonplace in the US. Let us bear in mind, though, that voice acting and dubbing take place at different production stages and thus call for different professional approaches. It is precisely the myriad of techniques and competences exclusive to the dubbing practice (and alien to voice acting) that might raise a number of issues when these newcomers have a try at dubbing for the first time. The recording process, the synchronies at play and the projection of the voice are just some constraints attached to the nature of dubbing that need to be considered with caution, even more when the famous figures do not belong to the acting sphere.

5. Conclusion

This article addresses a vastly under-researched topic that revolves around two key concepts in Film Studies and AVT Studies: voice

acting and dubbing. The aim has been to ascertain whether the use of celebrities in the voicing of an original film may hold sway over the cast featuring the dubbing in the target version. The results show that, whilst the vast majority of Hollywood blockbusters are being voiced by famous personalities, in the Spanish market there is a slight inclination towards casting dubbing actors, mainly because of their practical and technical know-how in the field. However, it seems undeniable that the presence of famous personalities in dubbed products is gradually gaining ground and that some profit-seeking strategies used in the original version are also adopted in the dubbed version with similar purposes. The connection between the fictional world and the real world in an attempt to activate the prior knowledge of the audience stands as a representative example.

The differences between voice acting and dubbing, though, reveal the techniques and competences that are necessary to accomplish each one of these tasks successfully. In this sense, the issues encountered by celebrities when voicing a character will differ from the ones risen in dubbing, in light of the singularity of this practice. Celebrities may indeed find it difficult to settle into the routines of dubbing by just spending a few hours in the recording booth and, since this profession has begun to be governed by busy schedules and tight deadlines (Pera 2012: 46), the chance of doing preliminary training as well as regular rehearsals is, more often than not, out of the question. Therefore, with the purpose of catching the eye of a larger audience, the big challenge for producers is to find the right balance between profitability and a suitable dubbing cast, considering that "voice selection is a crucial task and for many professionals, the success of a dubbing largely depends on the right choice of voice talent" (Chaume 2012: 36).

Although the present paper can be seen as a first step to narrow the gap between voice acting and dubbing, this study would benefit from an empirical research on the target viewership so as to find out if, or how, the inclusion of celebrities in the dubbing cast might alter the audience's cinematic experience and whether their performances enjoy a favourable or an unfavourable reception among the general public. After all, "characters remain as words in the text only when those words have no readers or listeners" (Culpeper 2001: 9).

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Biography

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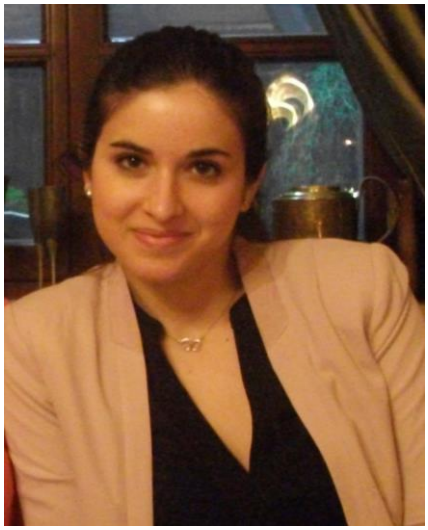

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Notes

[1] These concepts are applied here to those famous figures enjoying enormous popularity among the public and usually being in the media spotlight (e.g. actors/actresses, singers, sportsmen/women, etc.).

[2] Throughout this article, and for the sake of brevity, the word "actors" will be used as a generic noun to refer to both actors and actresses.

[3] Dubbing actors are responsible for making the oral delivery of the translated written text in a way that their words fit in the original character's mouth as if the onscreen character was uttering such words. They are also called voice talents, dubbers or dubbing artists (Chaume 2012: 188).

[4] Most studios use cardioid mics with an external pop filter, which requires a number of technical considerations such as correct distance to the microphone and variation in intensity and volume.

[5] Permission requested: October 7, 2014.